

A peek into the past

Duxbury's Early Settlers: Thomas Prence

The property granted to Thomas Prence comprised 80 acres.

At the time, Prence was married to Patience Brewster, daughter of Elder Brewster;



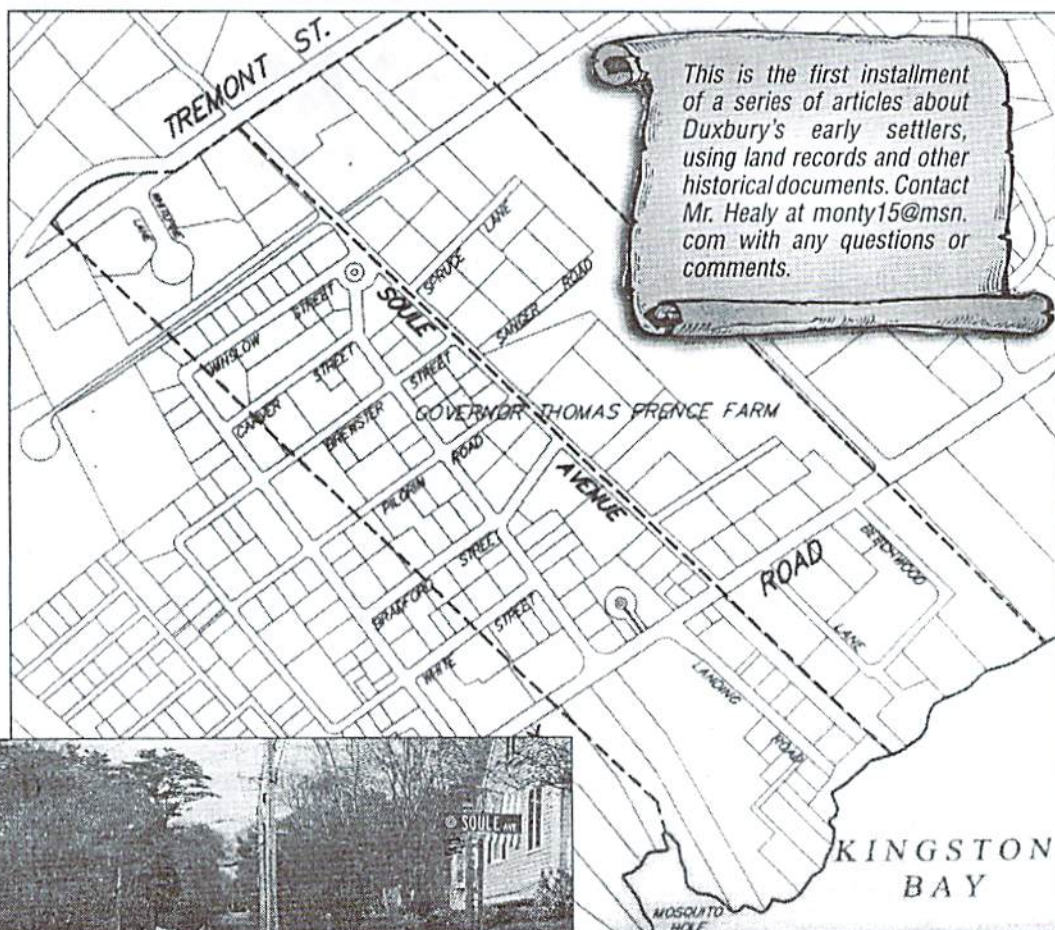
By LAMONT "MONTY" HEALY

they had two children, Thomas, Jr. and Rebecca. Prence was the third governor of Plymouth Colony, serving 18 times

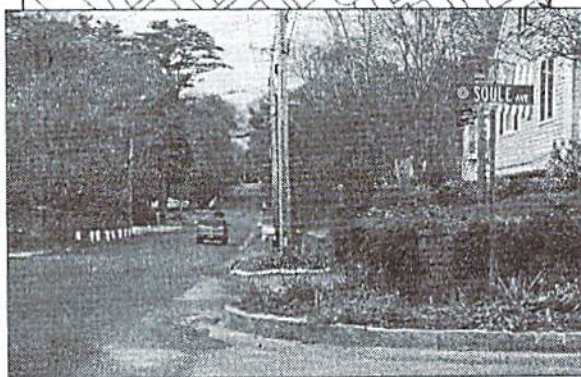
(one-year terms) and when he was not governor, he was assistant governor.

In total, Prence had Thomas, Jr., and eight daughters. He was married to Patience from 1624 to 1634, when she died. He then married Mary Collier, daughter of William Collier, another Duxbury settler, in 1636, and finally married Mary Freeman, widow of Samuel Freeman of Eastham in 1662. All but two of his daughters settled in Eastham and his son Thomas went to England.

His daughter Mary married John Tracey of Duxbury, and his daughter Elizabeth married Arthur Howland of Marshfield. The colony records mention, "Arthur Howland is fined five pounds for making proposals to Elizabeth, daughter of Thomas Prence, contrary to the mind and will of their parents." Arthur could not be dissuaded, however, and he



This is the first installment of a series of articles about Duxbury's early settlers, using land records and other historical documents. Contact Mr. Healy at monty15@msn.com with any questions or comments.



The 80-acre property granted to Thomas Prence, the third governor of Plymouth Colony, is today bordered by Kingston Bay, Bay Road and Tremont Street, and bisected by Soule Avenue (inset).

eventually married Elizabeth. Apparently, even Pilgrims had in-law issues.

Prence died in Plymouth in 1673 at the age of 73. His property passed to John Howland (Pilgrim), who Governor Bradford called "a lusty yonge man," and then to William Kempe (Kemp) on April 2, 1640, the last time it contained 80 acres. William Kempe was married to Elizabeth Partridge, the Rev. Ralph Partridge's

daughter. Rev. Ralph was the first minister of Duxbury's church.

At this point, it appears the easterly 40 acres (which includes present-day Soule Avenue, Spruce Street, Sanger Road and Beechwood Lane) passed into the Partridge family. First Elizabeth inherited the property upon the death of her husband William Kemp (1). (We use numbers to differentiate between people of

the same name but of different generations.) It is strange that a daughter would inherit property in the 17th century, but she must have been the Rev. Ralph's only child. Then the property was sold or given to George Partridge, likely an uncle or cousin, and he left it to his son, James.

The next known owner was Charles Turner who was minister of the Duxbury

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The Prence property

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Church in 1755. He resigned the ministry in 1776 "because of ill health," but many believe it was because he was a Loyalist. He moved to what is now Turner, Maine (yes, they renamed the town after him,) and some of his stories refer to his stay in Duxbury and being jeered while preaching with the meeting house half empty (H. A. Fish).

Charles Turner, Jr. deeded the property referred to as the "Turner Farm" to Zedekiah Sanger, who succeeded Charles Turner as minister of the Duxbury Church. Rev. Sanger was quite successful as Duxbury's minister, and the meeting house would only hold half of the people who wanted to attend. (The Revolutionary War undoubtedly resolved this problem.) Rev. Sanger was the first minister to preach in the Meeting House that the Unitarian Church replaced. After about 10 years (1776-c. 1786) Rev. Sanger resigned; he tried navigation and failed, and then resumed preaching in south Bridgewater.

The next owners of the easterly 40 acres were James Soule (family members pronounce the name "sole" and it was originally spelled Soul), his sons James and Richard, and after them, Renslow Crosby who had married one of the family.

James (1) had a shipyard at the water's edge (just east of the current Landing Road Beach) where he had built a wharf and conducted a salt works. The Soules built a number of small craft. It seems that there was an active shipyard

Famous Prence decedents

Bing Crosby - Singer and Actor

Sarah Palin - Fmr. Governor of Alaska

Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry - War of 1812 hero

Matthew Perry - U.S. Navy Commodore, opened Japan to the West

Arthur Sulzberger Jr. - New York Times publisher

Orville and Wilbur Wright - Flight pioneers

on this property for more than 100 years when it was finally sold to Edward G. Beechwood in 1922.

It appears that Soule Avenue got its name from the Soule family, Sanger Road from the Rev. Zedekiah Sanger, and Beechwood Lane from Edward G. Beechwood. The other streets probably were named for "what was there:" Spruce - spruce trees; Summerhouse - a summer house.

The westerly 40 acres of Prence's original 80, passed to Patience Kempe (Kempe, not because she was William Kempe's (1) daughter, but because she was William Kempe's (2) daughter) who married Dr. Samuel Seabury and probably was given this 40 acre lot by her grandmother Elizabeth (Partridge) Kempe Thatcher, who inherited the land from her first husband, William Kempe. Follow?

The land was in Dr. Samuel Seabury's possession before Feb. 13, 1689 when George Partridge referred to it in a deed (Ply. Colony Reg. of Deeds, Bk. 1, P. 142) (E.D.J.). Henry A. Fish describes at length the matrimonial alliances of the

Partridge, Kemp, Thatcher, and Seabury families as "causing no end of trouble to genealogists." No doubt!

Here's what we think happened: William Kempe (1) was a widower with a son William Kempe (2) when he married Elizabeth Partridge. William Kempe (1) died c. 1641, and his widow married the Rev. Thomas Thatcher in 1643 and they had a daughter Patience (named after her grandmother Partridge) who grew up to marry William Kempe (2), her mother's step-son.

According to Justin Winsor's *History of Duxbury* (1849), the inlet below Bay Road west of Landing Road was referred to as "Mosquito Hole" as early as 1639. This establishes a historical reason for why the southerly portion of Myles Standish Park is sometimes referred to as "Mosquito Village." For the most part, streets in this area are named after the early Pilgrim settlers.

The Shore Acres Inn was located on the southwest corner of the intersection of Soule Avenue and Tremont Street in the late 1920s. The Inn was owned by Louise Chandler and her husband Norman St. George and catered to actors and actresses. After her husband died, Louise married actor Carl Stowe and they continued to operate the Inn for some time. It was not unusual to see Mrs. Stowe, noted for her striking outfits, out doing her daily shopping wearing white gloves and a large hat.

Stay tuned to the Clipper for more stories about Duxbury's early settlers.